

## VERMONT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS ADVISORY

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| Date: | 11/23/09 |  | Contact: | Mark Bosma, Public Information Officer<br>Vermont Emergency Management<br>(800) 347-0488 |
| Time: | 0930     |  |          |  |

### Winter Weather Series – Preparing for the Season

**\*\*Editors - Vermont Emergency Management will address ways you can prepare for the winter months by sharing a series of messages through the media. The continued cooperation of all media outlets in Vermont in spreading this guidance is always appreciated\*\***

WATERBURY – Vermonters have seen most of what winter has to offer over the past few years. A blizzard that left several feet of snow on areas of the state; ice storms that have knocked out power and closed roads for several days in various areas of the state; and strong winds that knock down trees and power lines, leaving most of us in the dark at one time or another.

These conditions can leave people stranded in their automobiles or trapped at home, without utilities or other services. The aftermath of a winter storm can have an impact on a community or the entire region for days, weeks or even months. Storm effects in Vermont include large snow accumulation; extremely cold temperatures; heavy, wet snow or icing on trees and power lines; ice jams and floods; or roof collapses.

Winter storms are also deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the actual storm. The major causes are automobile or other transportation accidents, exhaustion and heart attacks caused by overexertion, ‘freezing to death’ and asphyxiation from improper heating sources. House fires occur more frequently in the winter due to lack of proper safety precautions when using alternate heating sources, like unattended fires and space heaters.

Improperly installed or ventilated generators are also a major winter hazard. Generators should be used outside or in well ventilated areas; exhaust from running generators can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

The effects of hazards in the winter, and year round, can be mitigated by some simple preparedness. This can range from setting up a phone tree to buying extra groceries to building a disaster preparedness kit.

Winter preparedness begins with coming up with a plan, and preparing a kit to sustain your family for extended periods should you become homebound during a storm; and now is the time to develop both:

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### **WINTER EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT**

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable radio or NOAA Weather Radio with extra batteries
- Charged cell phone
- First-aid kit
- Essential prescription medicines
- Non-perishable Food
- Manual can opener
- Water (one gallon per person/per day)
- Baby items
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher

### **FAMILY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Develop a 'Family Emergency Communication Plan' in case family members are separated from one another during a winter storm (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), and have a plan for getting back together.

- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the 'family contact'. After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance than across town. Also, calling outside the area will probably be easier than calling into a disaster area.
- Make sure everyone knows the name, address and telephone number of the contact person.
- Sometimes an emergency could impact your neighborhood or small section of town. Decide on an alternate meeting area for family members.
- Be familiar with the Emergency Plans at your children's school and your workplace.
- Be aware of the location of your community's potential emergency shelters and possible evacuation routes.

These steps can help reassure everyone's safety and minimize the stress associated with emergencies.

Phone numbers to know:

511 – For updated driving conditions. You can also visit [www.511vt.com](http://www.511vt.com).

211 – For information on emergency resources like fuel assistance. 211 is a service of the United Way.

Vermont Emergency Management's Family Preparedness Workbook has these and other helpful tips for a number of hazards. You can obtain a copy by calling 800-347-0488 or at [www.vemvt.com](http://www.vemvt.com).